

SCA 16 (Steinberg)

Appointment of Legislative Vacancies

Purpose

SCA 16 ensures full representation in each house of the California Legislature in the event of a vacancy. It also severely reduces taxpayer funded cost of special elections.

Background

Since 2001, there have been 35 special elections not consolidated with a regular primary or general election to fill a vacancy in the California State Legislature. The vast majority of those – 27 in total – have been held in the last seven years.

Over the last four years, 18 vacancies have led to over 2,000 cumulative days of lost representation in the state legislature. On top of that, special elections are costing counties millions of dollars to produce.

More than half of the special elections since 2008 have been in Los Angeles County, where more than \$20 million has been spent to hold those special elections.

Compounding the problem, special elections have abysmally low turnout, averaging around 15 percent since 2008, which weakens the democratic process.

Bill Summary

- Requires the Governor to appoint a person to fill a vacancy in either house of the Legislature within 21 days
- The appointee must have the same political party preference as the vacating Legislator
- If the vacating Legislator did not have a political party preference, the Governor may appoint regardless of political party
- The house with the vacancy may reject an appointment within 21 days of the appointment being made; otherwise the appointee is eligible to take office following the 21st day
- If an appointment is rejected, the Governor shall make another appointment within 21 days

Support

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